

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

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USMISSION USEC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 6372

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AU

SUBJECT: LEADERSHIP CHANGE IN AUSTRIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY

REFS: A) VIENNA 6234 (NOTAL)

B) VIENNA 5706 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: YOUNGER, LESS CONSERVATIVE LEADERS ARE EXPECTED TO ASSUME CONTROL AUSTRIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP) AS RESULT OF CHAIRMAN SCHLEINZER'S DEATH. DR. JOSEF TAUS, 41-YEAR-OLD DIRECTOR OF SAVINGS BANKING SYSTEM AND LONG-TIME MEMBER OF OVP'S LABOR LEAGUE, IS EXPECTED CHOICE TO LEAD PARTY IN OCTOBER 5 NATIONAL ELECTION AGAINST 66-YEAR-OLD CHANCELLOR KREISKY'S GOVERNING SOCIALISTS. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE OVP'S CHANCES OF WINNING UP-HILL BATTLE TO REPLACE SOCIALISTS AS LARGEST AUSTRIAN PARTY ARE NOW DIMINISHED. NEVERTHELESS, ONLY UNEXPECTEDLY INEPT CAMPAIGN UNDER
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NEW CHAIRMAN OR UNANTICIPATED DISASTER OCTOBER 5 WOULD

BRING PARTY'S OLDER, MORE CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP AGAIN TO FORE. CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP MAY BRING CHANGE OF STYLE TO ELECTION CAMPAIGN BUT NO CHANGE IN ITS SUBSTANTIVE THRUST. EMBASSY FORESEES NO CHANGE IN POSITIVE ORIENTATION OF PARTY TOWARD US AND US LEADERSHIP OF DEMOCRATIC WORLD. END SUMMARY.

2. DEATH OF AUSTRIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP) CHAIRMAN AND CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE KARL SCHLEINZER IN AUTO ACCIDENT JULY 19 (REF A) HAS PLACED OVP IN DIFFICULT POSITION JUST TWO MONTHS BEFORE OCTOBER 5 ELECTION FOR NATIONAL PARLIAMENT. ONLY POSITIVE ASPECT OF SITUATION WAS THAT SCHLEINZER AND OVP HAD ALREADY BEEN PLACING HEAVY EMPHASIS UPON YOUNG, DYNAMIC TEAM BEHIND SCHLEINZER, ONE OF WHOM NOW SEEMS CERTAIN TO TAKE OVER. OVP MUST, HOWEVER, IN SHORT TIME AVAILABLE ATTEMPT TO BUILD UP NEW LEADER WHILE ALSO IRONING OUT INTERNAL DIFFERENCES INEVITABLE WITH LEADERSHIP SHIFT AND ORGANIZATIONAL REARRANGEMENTS. COSTS OF ACCELERATED PRODUCTION OF NEW LITERATURE AND REPLACEMENT OF OVER MILLION SCHILLINGS WORTH OF NOW USELESS MATERIAL PREPARED FOR SCHLEINZER BUILD-UP WILL PROBABLY STRAIN PARTY'S FINANCIAL CAPACITY AND RESOURCES.

3. UNDER TEMPORARY CHAIRMANSHIP OF RUDOLF SALLINGER, PRESIDENT OF OVP'S ECONOMIC LEAGUE, OVP IS MOVING WITH DISPATCH TO SELECT NEW LEADER. EXECUTIVE BOARD DECIDED JULY 21 THAT IT WOULD NOMINATE SINGLE MAN FOR OVP CHAIRMAN AND CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE, SELECT NOMINEE AT FURTHER BOARD MEETING JULY 24 FOLLOWING SOUNDINGS BY SALLINGER, AND CONVOKE EXTRAORDINARY OVP CONGRESS JULY 31 TO CONSIDER BOARD'S NOMINEE OR ELECT SOMEONE ELSE. IT ALREADY APPEARS THAT DR. JOSEF TAUS, 42-YEAR-OLD DIRECTOR OF CLEARING HOUSE AND UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION FOR AUSTRIAN SAVINGS BANKING SYSTEM (GIROZENTRALE), WILL BE NOMINATED AND ELECTED. OTHERS ACTIVELY CONSIDERED BY BOARD ARE 41-YEAR-OLD DR. ALOIS MOCK, PRESIDENT OF OVP(S) LABOR LEAGUE, AND - A DISTANT THIRD - 55-YEAR-OLD DR. STEPHAN KOREN, OVP'S PARLIAMENTARY FLOOR LEADER. REGIONAL NOMINEES MAY BE SUGGESTED FROM

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CONGRESS FOLLOW BUT ARE GIVEN LITTLE CHANCE, ESPECIALLY SINCE MOCK HAS ALREADY INDICATED HE IS PREPARED TO SUPPORT TAUS.

4. TAUS IS LESS WELL KNOWN TO PUBLIC THAN MOCK OR KOREN BUT IS CONSIDERED MOST ABLE CANDIDATE FOR OVP'S TOP POST BY MANY PROMINENT PARTY FELLOWS AND BY SOCIALIST PARTY SPOKESMEN AS WELL. TAUS ONCE SAID

PUBLICLY HE WAS "INSUFFICIENTLY CONSERVATIVE" FOR HIS PARTY, BUT HE IS CONSIDERED MORE CONSERVATIVE THAN MOCK AND MORE POSITIVE IN OUTLOOK THAN KOREN, WHO HAS REPUTATION AS CYNIC. LIKE MOCK, TAUS COMES FROM OVP'S LABOR LEAGUE AND IS STILL MEMBER, BUT HIS METEORIC CAREER IN ECONOMIC WORLD OF PUBLIC BANKING AND INDUSTRY, DURING WHICH HE UNDERTOOK AS AUSTRIA'S YOUNGEST CABINET MEMBER DELICATE TASK OF REMOVING POLITICIANS FROM IMMEDIATE DIRECTION OF STATE-OWNED INDUSTRIES BY CREATING HOLDING COMPANY HE STILL HEADS, MAKE HIM MORE ACCEPTABLE THAN MOCK TO POWERFUL OVP BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL INTERESTS. NEVERTHELESS, HIS WORKING CLASS BACKGROUND, HIS SELF-MADE IMAGE, AND HIS CONCENTRATION ON MAKING STATE INSTITUTIONS WORK WELL RATHER THAN OPPOSING THEM ON PRINCIPAL, MAKES HIM EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE TO WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES. HE IS CONSIDERED BRILLIANT, EXTREMELY HARD WORKING, QUIETLY ASSERTIVE, AND DECISIVE, ALL OF WHICH SEEM TO BODE WELL FOR HIS POSSIBLE STEWARDSHIP OF OVP.

5. WHETHER TAUS OR SOMEONE ELSE LEADS OVP, BASIC POLICIES ADVOCATED BY PARTY WILL NOT CHANGE SIGNIFICANTLY. LEADERSHIP WILL FALL TO YOUNGER GENERATION, HOWEVER, MORE PRAGMATICALLY THAN IDEOLOGICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND WITH MORE PROGRESSIVE AIR. THIS COULD EVENTUALLY TILT OVP TOWARD MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACHES ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES BUT OVP'S POWERFUL ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL LEAGUES WILL BE STRONG RESTRAINING INFLUENCE. VERY POSITIVE ORIENTATION OF PARTY TOWARD US AND US LEADERSHIP OF DEMOCRATIC WORLD, AND TOWARD PROCESS OF EUROPEAN AND WESTERN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND COOPERATION, SHOULD NOT CHANGE.

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6. EMBASSY HAS MAINTAINED CLOSE TIES WITH ALL THREE POTENTIAL OVP LEADERS. TAUS WAS 1966 LEADER GRANTEE AND HAS VISITED US FREQUENTLY SINCE, MOST RECENTLY TO PARTICIPATE IN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS SEMINAR; MOCK WAS 1973 LEADER GRANTEE. BUCHANAN

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